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Letter dated 3 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a communication containing our comments on the final report of the Panel of Experts established by the Security Council pursuant to resolution 1237 (1999) of 7 May 1999, which was issued on 10 March 2000 under the symbol S/2000/203.

I should be extremely grateful if you would have the above-mentioned communication circulated as a document of the Security Council under the item on the situation in Angola.

(*Signed*) Claude **Bouah-Kamon**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 3 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, following the publication on 10 March 2000 of the report of the independent Panel of Experts to investigate violations of the Security Council sanctions against UNITA (S/2000/203), I have the honour to inform you as follows:

The relations between Côte d'Ivoire and UNITA are a consequence of the cold war.

If the Ivorian Government has continued to maintain close relations with the UNITA authorities, this has been to some extent at the request of the Government in Luanda, with which Côte d'Ivoire enjoys excellent diplomatic relations at the level of ambassadors. Côte d'Ivoire has long served as an intermediary to facilitate contacts between the two parties to the conflict.

However, following the signing of the Lusaka agreements and the failure of UNITA to respect their provisions, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire decided to freeze its relations with Mr. Savimbi's organization.

Paragraphs 122, 142 and 143 of the report contain specific accusations against Côte d'Ivoire.

Even though the National Committee for Public Salvation and the Government of Transition which rule Côte d'Ivoire have not deemed it appropriate since the publication of the report to react officially to the allegations of the Panel of Experts concerning the purported "illegal" relations that exist between Côte d'Ivoire and UNITA, this silence does not mean that they accept the allegations contained in the report or that they attach no importance to the question of Angola and, in particular, to the suffering of the fraternal people of that nation.

Our delay in reacting must be viewed in the light of the new circumstances that have existed in Côte d'Ivoire since the political events of 24 December 1999, which have led to significant changes in the political situation.

In the light of these new realities, the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire considered that it was necessary to take sufficient time to carefully study the contents of the report of the Panel of Experts covering the period from 1993 to 1998.

Since the Panel of Experts has highlighted the relations that existed between President Bedié and UNITA during this period, the current authorities of Côte d'Ivoire find it difficult to understand the statement contained in the report that "however, the current military leadership in Abidjan is said to be close to Savimbi and very sympathetic to UNITA. UNITA supporters have reacted very positively to the arrival of the new regime" (para. 142).

On what basis can it be claimed that the military leadership which has taken power in Abidjan is close to Savimbi and very sympathetic to UNITA?

Is it necessary to recall that it was the same military leadership which, on 24 December 1999, overthrew President Bedié and his regime because it strongly disagreed with the way in which Côte d'Ivoire was being managed? Need we also

recall that the majority of these military figures were not in positions of authority under the regime of the deposed President?

The National Committee for Public Salvation and the Government of Transition consider that the question of Angola is too serious to be treated lightly on the basis of broad allegations that leave doubts in the minds of many, including the Panel of Experts, which has recognized, notably in paragraph 143, that the "Panel was unable fully to confirm the information relating to Vansco Air Freight, but believes that future investigation is warranted."

The authorities of Côte d'Ivoire wish to underscore the patently dangerous nature of the allegations contained in paragraph 142. In terms of its grammatical structure, the Panel of Experts uses the impersonal form in support of its accusation. In fact, the sentence in question uses the words "is said to be". Upon closer examination, the use of this impersonal form shows that the Panel of Experts is not itself convinced about what "is said" and, let us state it clearly, "peddled". And yet, on this basis, it makes accusations against a State Member of the United Nations. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire considers this approach to be damaging to the credibility of the United Nations.

With regard to paragraph 143, apart from the fact that this paragraph also makes extensive use of the impersonal form ("is said to", etc.), the allegations of the Panel of Experts raise the following questions:

How does the fact that a foreign national, even one close to Mr. Savimbi, whose wife is a national of Côte d'Ivoire and a member of one of the prominent families of that country and who is himself very well known in the circles of power and moves in high social circles in Abidjan constitute a violation of Security Council sanctions?

If one marries a person who is a member of a prominent family, it is logical that the two spouses would move in high social circles together with other prominent families. How do such a marriage and the fact of moving in such circles constitute a crime or a violation of United Nations sanctions?

On the question of the Vansco Air Freight company of Mr. Kakumba, the corporate name, which is well known, should have been published. Does that name appear in the business register of Côte d'Ivoire?

What concrete evidence is there to suggest that it is "involved in the transport of arms and other equipment to UNITA"? And what is the specific nature of this "other equipment"?

If the Panel of Experts was unable "fully" to confirm the information relating to Vansco Air Freight, what at least is the partial information that it has?

The authorities of Côte d'Ivoire also wish to point out that, unless there is tangible proof of collusion between the new authorities and UNITA, of which, moreover, Côte d'Ivoire would like to be informed, the notion of "credible evidence" would seem to lack any basis.

This credibility is evident only to the authors, who should have named the source of the information received. Is the source close to UNITA or to the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire?

Concerning the relations between the deposed President Henri Konan Bedié and Mr. Savimbi with respect to the "money .... to be used for UNITA purposes and for the upkeep of Savimbi's immediate and extended family in Côte d'Ivoire" (para. 122), the report should have stated the amounts, dates on which the money was deposited, the numbers of the bank accounts into which they were deposited, and so on.

In any event, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire considers that the report of the Panel of Experts (S/2000/203) suffers from a lack of evidence and contains only gratuitous assertions that cast doubt on its objectivity.

In this new century and following the events of 24 December 1999, Côte d'Ivoire intends to promote national reconciliation and to strengthen its ties to the United Nations and to all fraternal countries, including Angola.

It also wishes to cooperate, in a spirit of transparency, with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 864 (1993) concerning the situation in Angola. In order to make its actions more effective, it would welcome any information that might not have come to its attention and which must surely be available to the Panel of Experts.

In any case, the various measures already taken or to be taken by Côte d'Ivoire in observance of the sanctions against UNITA will be immediately brought through you to the attention of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Claude **Bouah-Kamon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative